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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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~ Google Checkout Debuts ~ MS To Face EU Action! ~ Mac OS X Updated!

-* TOS Source Code Available! *-
-* Symantec To Enter Anti-fraud Space! *-
-* International Virus-writing Gang Busted! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"*****"

Well, the gauntlet was thrown down last week; we'll see how it goes. Joe and I have been "talking" over the past week; and we're both running out of ideas to resolve this inactivity. Is this the end of the Atari civilization as we know it? We certainly hope that this is not the case. Well, I won't dwell on it any longer - at least for this week.

Remember that rain-soaked golf tournament I mentioned last week? Well, it rained all during the one-hour drive to the course. However, as soon as I pulled into the parking lot, the rain stopped. Surprisingly, it didn't rain at all for the rest of the day. Yes, it was overcast and extremely humid, but no rain. Oh, and by the way, our team won!!

I'm finally starting to see the fruit of my labor out in the yard the past few weeks. With all of this rain that we've been having, but little sunshine, my newly-planted grass is finally starting to sprout. All of the major areas that I've re-loamed are complete, but I still have about 2-3 yards left, so I'll start filling in some bare areas (if this rain ever goes away). And. I only have a little bark mulch left to spread, so I'll find a few spots that can use it. I started sanding down the patio bar chairs, and will paint them over (again, if the rain ever stops!). Then I'll get to retouch the painted areas around the pool. That should be an interesting project!

So, while we wait for the weather to improve up and down the east coast, I want to remind everyone to celebrate responsibly next week, during your 4th of July celebrations.

Until next time...

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Atari TOS Source Code and More Now Available

Mike Hill and Lonny Pursell have made available the source code to much of the operating system of the Atari ST/STE/TT/Falcon line of computers.

The source code to the AES, VDI, AHDI, CPX's, Xcontrol, Neochrome and more is available on Lonnie's Atari Document Archive.

Hopefully this code can help Atari coders.

Be aware the file is big. About 34MB zipped.

URL: <http://dev-docs.atariforge.org/>

21 More Issues of Compute! at AtariMagazines.com

AtariMagazines.com has added the full text of 21 more issues of Compute! magazine: Fall 1979 (the first issue!), January 1981, February 1981, March 1981, April 1981, October 1981, December 1981, February 1982, June 1982, July 1982, October 1982, November 1982, January 1983, March 1983, June 1983, August 1983, September 1983, October 1983, September 1989, November 1990, and December 1990.

<http://www.AtariMagazines.com/compute/>

Published from 1979 through 1994, Compute! was a multiplatform computer magazine covering Atari, Apple, Commodore, Texas Instruments, Timex/Sinclair, and other early personal computers.

Founded in 1996, the Classic Computer Magazine Archive delivers thousands of articles from Antic, SStart, Creative _Computing, Compute!, Compute II, Hi-Res, Creative Computing Video & Arcade Games Magazine, and Tandy Whiz Kids comic books.

<http://www.AtariMagazines.com>

Enjoy,
Kevin

BITS Intro #21 :: uOn

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... or how to amuse with
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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. First off, I'd like to thank the people who emailed me to ask if things were REALLY okay, since I missed last week's column. I appreciate the interest, but it really was because of a lack of messages in the newsgroup.

Like Dana said last week, if you've got anything to say about your Atari, now's the time, folks. The alternative, I'm afraid, is for me to jump up on my soapbox every week and regurgitate all the political stuff that's happened during the previous week.

Now, I'll bet that I find myself much more amusing than you do, and even _I_ wouldn't want to have to read that every week. <grin>

Dana and I were talking the other day, and we both find it mildly amazing that, after this amount of time, that there are ANY messages in the Atari-related newsgroups. I mean, heck, Atari hasn't made a computer in... what?... 10 years? 12?

What really kind of amazes me is the number of people still using an Atari computer, even if it's 'just' a nostalgia thing. I mean, I've still got my TT set up on my desk, and my trusty STacy at the ready, but to be truthful, they don't see a lot of use anymore.

It's kind of funny, but I've got a poster in my computer room that says, "All I need to know I learned from Star Trek" and then lists things that come in handy in everyday life... IF you happen to find yourself in the Neutral Zone. <g>

But the point is that it reminded me of a scene from one of the Star Trek movies with the original cast. Remember when Scotty had an attitude about that new ship, the Excelsior? Now, here's the guy that's supposed to be an icon in his field; an engineer's engineer, a top-notch space-dude, and he doesn't like the next step in the evolution of the starship? Excuse me?

That's when it hit me that most of us, even in our chosen field of work or hobby, are more than willing to advance to a certain point, but no more than that. Scotty was THE man when it came to eeking out the last possible erg of energy from a Type III Matter/Antimatter engine, but he wouldn't budge on Transwarp technology. As far as he was concerned, it was shlock.

Okay, by now you're thinking one of two things. Either you're thinking, "jeez is this guy a MONSTER geek", or "what the hell is he talking about this for in an Atari computer column".

The reason I'm talking about it is because that's the way I am with my Atari computers. I was all up on the 520 and 1040 ST stuff... what you had to do to get certain programs to run, what caused smearing on the SC1224 with an early 1040 ST, and how to "drop-fix" a malfunctioning 520... but when it came to MiNT/Multi-TOS, the Falcon030, or anything else beyond a particular point, I just wasn't interested. I'd gone as far as I'd wanted to go, and anything over and above that was more than I wanted to deal with.

Funny, ain't it? I'll never be what Scotty was supposed to have been (and, yes, I DO understand that it's all fiction... I'm not THAT much of a geek), but I understand that feeling. I hit my comfort level where things were 'just right', and I was happy.

Wouldn't it be nice if everyone could recognize their comfort level when they hit it? And wouldn't it be even nicer if everyone would just let you be happy with yours?

Well, let's get to the UseNet and see if there's enough activity for a column, huh?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Claude Bourgoïn asks for help in troubleshooting his networked TT:

"I have a TT030 connected to my home network with a daynaport. The problem is everytime I turn on the TT with the daynaport connected the TT030 crashes after it loads one of .stx files.

In my auto folder I have Sting.prg, SCSILink.prg and have only the 3 sting network .cpx.

HDDriver sees the daynaport because it tells me that Daynoport rom is ver 2.0F. I have ten megs of ram in the TT. I am only using TOS as the operating system.

This same daynaport works fine on my Falcon running Magic 5.11. Any suggestions will be greatly appreciated."

Roger Burrows tells Claude:

"What's this SCSILINK.PRG program? You just need SCSILINK.STX in your STING folder."

David Wade adds:

"There was a problem at one time with HD Driver V8 and Daynaport and you don't say which versions you are using. If you have HDX V8.xx you need v0.71 of the Daynaport box. In any case it might be worth trying V7.xx of HD Driver..."

Edward Baiz tells David and Claude:

"I had the same problem when I was trying to install th EtherNEC card in my STe. I replaced some STX files and deleted the ones that I did not need and STING ran like a dream."

Uwe Seimet adds:

"I doubt that this is a HDDRIVER issue, otherwise I would expect problems with the Falcon, too. You should check your resident programs, AUTO folder and accessories."

'Denbler' asks for help in finding a particular chess program:

"It [the chess game] had great 3D graphics and it ran in high resolution screen. please help me find it again!"

Ingo Schmidt tries to help:

"I know Chessmaster or Chessmaster 2000. Something like that. When it started, it said: 'I am the Chessmaster, wanna play a game'?"

Edward Baiz tells Ingo:

"That could be it, but I am not sure it ran in high rez. I have it, but have always played it in low rez."

Ingo replies:

"I know I played it in ST-High, so yes, maybe thats really the one."

Daniel Mandic adds:

"Try Colossus Chess 4.0. I think the ST Version was called Colossus Chess X. I have only found this article, pointing out some troubles with the Program.

http://www.stcarchiv.de/am89/05_colossus.php "

Matthias Arndt adds:

"If it is old and for ST, it might be 'Psion Chess'."

Ronald Hall adds something that I was thinking too:

"It didn't run in a high-res screen, but I was always partial to BattleChess. Loved the animations."

Well folks, there weren't as many messages in the newsgroup as I'd hoped, so that's it for this week. Maybe things will pick up... I hope so.

Till next week, keep your hand on the transporter when you yell "Ye kenna change the laws 'a physics", and always, ALWAYS be ready to listen to what they are saying when....

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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## Take-Two Receives New York Grand Jury Subpoenas

Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. on Monday said it received grand jury subpoenas requesting documents related to hidden sex scenes in its "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" video game, acquisitions, accounting and other issues.

The company said that on June 19 it received grand jury subpoenas issued by the District Attorney of New York County requesting documents from various periods beginning on October 1, 2001.

Take-Two said it has not been advised that it or any specific individual is presently a target of the investigation. It said it is fully cooperating and providing the requested documents.

# Reservoir Dogs Game Banned in Oz

Computer game Reservoir Dogs has been effectively banned in Australia after the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) refused to give the title an MA 15+ rating.

Originally due out next month, the game is based on the Quentin Tarantino cult classic, and the OFLC said the decision was made on the basis that the game contained "frequent depictions of violence that have a high impact".

The game is currently undergoing classification in New Zealand, and Atari said it fully expected it to be released there next month.

Australia's game classification system differs from those in many other countries in that there is no adult category for games - unlike film and other media.

Computer games that have been Refused Classification (RC) cannot be sold, hired or even demonstrated in Australia.

Marc Ecko's *Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure*, a game about graffiti artists, was refused classification earlier this year under the rigorous

scheme, after local councils and state governments asked for a review of its MA 15+ rating on the basis that playing the game might promote or incite a crime.

The Reservoir Dogs game is a third-person shooter that follows the progression of the central heist, allowing gamers to fill in some of the gaps left over from the film.

During the game, players can "blow the heads off hostages and police as well as execute hostages at point-blank range with a gunshot to the head", the OFLC said.

It added that the game also allowed players to deploy different means to torture such as "repeated pistol whipping the side of the head with blood spray evident, burning the eyes of a hostage with a cigar until they scream and die, cutting the fingers off a hostage with blood bursts as the victim screams in pain".

Published by Eidos Interactive, the game was set to be distributed here next month by Atari for the PC, Xbox and PlayStation 2 platforms.

Atari and Eidos have decided not to appeal the decision or resubmit an edited version of the game.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

#### Senate Panel Backs Telco Bill, No Net Neutrality

The U.S. Senate Commerce Committee approved sweeping communications reform legislation on Wednesday that would make it easier for telephone companies like AT&T to give 1.3 million to candidates - mostly to the Republicans who control Congress, according to PoliticalMoneyLine, which tracks money in politics.

The measure would limit local authorities to 90 days to review and negotiate a license with a video provider. It would allow cities to collect up to 6 percent of gross revenue earned by a company for its video service.

Additionally, the committee voted to require the Federal Communications Commission to adopt consumer-protection and customer-service regulations on wireless communications service.

Facing opposition, Sen. John Rockefeller, a West Virginia Democrat, withdrew his amendment that would have eliminated provisions in the bill preempting states from imposing numerous regulations on wireless service.

The panel also approved a permanent ban on taxing Internet access and handily rejected an amendment to encourage cable providers to offer consumers the ability to pay only for the cable television channels they want, known as a la carte.

## Symantec Preparing To Enter Anti-fraud Space

The recent super-sophisticated phishing attack against online payment service PayPal was yet more proof that the inability of anti-virus and firewall tools to stop new threats is the worst-kept secret in computer security.

The attack exploited a cross-site scripting flaw, allowing unknown fraudsters to inject a phony warning message and malicious phishing Web site link into a page served by a PayPal secure server.

The attacks have anti-virus stalwarts scrambling to plug the holes in their security armor. Last week, McAfee launched a beta program for Falcon, a new total protection suite with SiteAdvisor software to sniff out malicious Web sites. Symantec is also getting into the game, announcing a new transaction security software package this week called Norton Confidential.

Confidential can spot fraud sites using a block list, as well as heuristic detection Symantec from Whole Security. It can detect crimeware such as keyloggers and online banking Trojans, said Bill Rosenkrantz, director of product management for consumer products at Symantec.

Norton Confidential would not have spotted the PayPal phishing scam, but it would have alerted customers when they landed on the actual phishing site that solicited their log-in information, Rosenkrantz said.

With no way to ensure that customer computers are not compromised, e-commerce and financial services companies are warming to the idea of risk-based authentication, said Jonathan Penn, an analyst at Forrester.

A beta release is scheduled for July. Parts of the product will be in the next version of Norton Internet Security. Beyond that, Symantec is planning to port some parts of Confidential to its enterprise end-point security line, Rosenkrantz said.

## Free Web Browser May Give You More Than You Asked For

A free Web browser that bills itself as a tool for privacy protection is, in fact, a click-fraud engine for pornographic Web sites, security vendor Panda Software warned today.

Browsezilla, whose name and Lizard-like mascot are reminiscent of the open-source Mozilla browser products, claims to help surfers cover their tracks when visiting pornographic sites. It does not use browser history or save data to a cache, and it allows users to save their bookmarks on a remote server, according to the product's Web site.

However, Browsezilla also secretly installs adware that boosts the page view counts on certain pornographic Web sites, according to J.J. Schoch, director of marketing with Panda. "It's being used deceptively to get more hits on their site," Schoch says. "This adware opens a series of adult web pages, although they are not visible to the user."

On its Web site, Panda describes itself as a provider of integrated security solutions to protect PCs from viruses, spyware, hackers, spam, and other Internet threats.

The company issued a press release warning about the browser, after noticing that Browsezilla was becoming more widely used. Although the browser has been adopted by users in a number of countries, it appears to be most popular in Italy, Schoch says.

Schoch adds that this is the first browser he has seen that downloads this type of click-generating software.

Panda is drawing attention to the matter because it believes the browser's creators are acting in a deceptive manner that ultimately could harm unsuspecting users, Schoch explains. "It's not going to wreck your computer, but it could taint somebody's reputation," he notes.

Users might already be wary of the software, even without Panda's warning. The Browsezilla download page features an "Adult links" section with hard-core pornographic images, a rarity in browser download sites.

The Browsezilla team called Panda's allegations "unsubstantiated" in a statement on the Browsezilla.com Web site, but the group shed little light on the situation when asked for further comment on Panda's press release.

#### International Virus-Writing Gang Busted

Police in the UK and Finland have rounded up three men allegedly involved in an international conspiracy to spread viruses by e-mail. The men arrested are a 63-year-old in England, a 28-year-old in Scotland, and a 19-year-old in Finland.

Police claim that the viruses enabled the crooks to steal private information on infected computers and that the men belong to an underground Internet gang called MOOP. The gang allegedly wrote software to ensure that their viruses could not be detected by antivirus software.

"Industry sources tell us that there are about 15 to 20 highly sophisticated crime rings operating across the globe that employ technically advanced attacks against consumers and the enterprises that service them, including banks, retailers, and other firms," said Avivah Litan, a vice president at Gartner, a technology research firm.

"These arrests are very welcome news for law enforcement and the consumers they protect," said Litan. "The arrest of these criminal ring members may lead to even more arrests and will put the gangsters on notice that law enforcement can indeed track them down."

Graham Cluley, a consultant with security firm Sophos, warned that there might be more members of the MOOP gang in other countries. "Computers seized at these arrested suspects' addresses could reveal an electronic trail that leads authorities to make more arrests," he said.

"The Stinx family of Trojan horses, which appear to be linked to the MOOP gang, have been widely distributed since the middle of last year using a variety of e-mail disguises," he noted. "The latest, just a week or two ago, claimed to be proof that U.S. President George W. Bush and British

Prime Minister Tony Bush were working in cahoots with oil companies to keep gasoline prices artificially high."

Cluley pointed out that cases like this highlight the fact that computer crime is a global problem. "Hackers who may never have met each other face-to-face are working in coordination over the Internet to steal, spy, and cause havoc on innocent computer users," he said.

"It should be remembered that what we have just seen in Britain and Finland was only three arrests," he cautioned. "No one has been charged yet, and there are many, many Internet criminals - actively exploiting the public's poor computer security - who probably will never feel the long hand of the law."

Jonathan Penn, a security analyst with Forrester Research, said that it is fairly common knowledge that hackers writing malicious software for the purpose of identity theft have established ties to organized crime. "Here's a nice concrete example of that," he said. "My reaction to this news is 'One down, 5,967 to go.'"

He said he does not want to belittle the law-enforcement efforts that led up to these arrests. "But if you look at the calculus of the whole thing - the odds of getting caught, the rewards from criminal activity, and the time and effort involved to bring perpetrators to justice - the criminals have a significant advantage," he said. "We need to change this calculus."

Jonathan Singer, a Yankee Group analyst, called the three arrested men "amateurs."

"Anyone foolish enough to essentially leave their digital fingerprints all over 'the weapon' is going to be easy pickings for police cybercrime units," he said. "Make no mistake, cybercrime units are good at what they do. They're very savvy. It's just a hard job to track online criminals and gather solid evidence."

#### Dell Says Investigating Exploding Laptop Incident

The Dell laptop computer seen bursting into flames in photographs on the Internet was being examined as part of the company's probe of the incident, Dell Inc. said on Tuesday.

"We have captured the notebook and have begun investigating the event," Dell spokeswoman Anne Camden said, confirming the computer was made by Dell but declining to specify the model. No one was hurt in the incident, she said.

The report of an exploding laptop at a conference in Osaka, Japan, accompanied by digital photos, was first published on technology industry news Web site The Inquirer last week.

Dell in December 2005 issued a battery recall for some of the batteries in its laptop due to overheating issues, according to the company's Web site.

Camden said it was too early to draw any conclusions and added that it did not appear that the incident had anything to do with the battery issues related to the recall.

"From here it's going to be a very methodical and meticulous process to figure out what happened," Camden said.

### Spammers Find Pictures Better Than Words

Spam is again on the rise, led by a flood of junk images that spammers have crafted over the past few months to trick e-mail filters, according to security vendors.

Called "image-based" spam, these junk images typically do not contain any text, making it harder for filters that look for known URLs or suspicious words to block them.

Instead of a typed message, users will see only an embedded.gif or.jpeg image file urging them to buy pharmaceuticals or invest in penny stocks.

Antispam vendor Cloudmark says that half of incoming spam on the "honeypot" systems it puts out on the Internet to lure spammers is now image-based. "About a year-and-a-half ago we started seeing a little bit of it, but it wasn't until the past six months that it became a serious issue for many antispam companies," said Adam O'Donnell, a senior research scientist with the company.

Image-based spam has jumped from about 1 percent of all spam messages in June 2005 to around 12 percent today, according to Craig Sprosts, senior product manager with IronPort Systems.

Its growth is helping to fuel a global resurgence in spamming, Sprosts said.

The total number of spam messages sent daily is up 40 percent since April, Sprosts said. Much of this new spam is coming from a "relatively small group of spammers with control over very large zombie networks," of hijacked computers, he said.

Spammers now generate an estimated 55 billion messages per day, according to IronPort. A year ago that number was 30 billion e-mail messages per day.

The combination of greater volume and better techniques has meant more complaints for network administrators.

"I've had users complaining in the last few weeks about the overall increase in spam and I've personally noticed an increased rate of spam and an increase in the percentage of it that's image-based," said Jonathan Forster, computing manager with the University of Arizona's Psychology Department.

Administrators at Avnet have started stripping certain embedded image files out of all messages, after seeing an uptick in image-based spam two months ago, said Rob Kudray, manager of messaging services with the computer distributor.

One other tactic that is helping keep in-boxes full is the spammers' practice of constantly registering new domains. Of the 35 million domains registered in April, 32 million were never paid for and expired after five days, Sprosts said. He believes that many of those domains were used by spammers to send out their unsolicited e-mail during that five-day grace

period.

This technique makes it very difficult to blacklist e-mail based on the URLs it contains. "Traditional blacklists and whitelist approaches just can't keep up with how fast they're registering new domains and changing the URLs in the e-mail," Sprosts said.

#### Microsoft To Face EU Action Over Antitrust Breach

The European Union's top antitrust regulator is set to issue a formal ruling finding software giant Microsoft Corp. guilty of breaking EU competition rules, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday.

The paper said Microsoft could face fines of up to 2 million euros (\$2.51 million) a day.

Quoting people familiar with the situation, the Financial Times said the European Commission's antitrust directorate had drafted a ruling according to which Microsoft had failed to fully implement the EU's March 2004 antitrust decision.

That decision included an order to provide rival companies with "complete and accurate" information about its Windows operating system, a step Brussels has said is needed for other firms to build products compatible with the Microsoft system.

"The Commission's process calls for an advisory committee meeting, so this comes as no surprise," Microsoft said in a statement, adding it had committed "massive resources to the technical documentation program" and had already delivered five of seven installments.

"The next two installments will be submitted on June 30 and July 18 and Microsoft is working hard to also meet those deadlines," it said.

"Given that the technical engagement is producing results and that Microsoft has complied fully with every instruction given by the Commission and the Trustee, any fine would be unjustified and unnecessary."

The Financial Times said the EU's draft ruling is due to be presented next Monday to national competition authorities. The EU Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes is expected to deliver the ruling on July 12, the paper said.

Commission officials declined to comment on the report or the date suggested for Kroes to issue her ruling.

"The Commission intends to decide before the end of July whether or not to impose daily fines on Microsoft for its failure to comply," a spokesman at the EU executive said.

The European Union fined Microsoft almost 500 million euros (\$628 million) in 2004.

#### Web Titans Team Up To Fight Child Porn

Microsoft Corp., Yahoo Inc., AOL and two other U.S. Internet companies late on Monday said they are joining forces to fight the distribution of child pornography on the Web.

The companies-which have cooperated in the past to battle viruses, spam and identity theft-said they will work with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) on the new effort.

"We believe it is possible to increase the chance that child predators will be caught and provide a deterrent to those who would be tempted to exploit children on the Internet," said John Ryan, chief counsel at Time Warner Inc.'s AOL.

Other participants in the effort, known as the Technology Coalition at NCMEC, include EarthLink Inc. and United Online Inc. Members, who are scheduled to testify before Congress on Tuesday morning, have pledged \$1 million in combined initial funding.

Ryan said the coalition's first order of business is to attack the distribution of illicit images of children on the Web by creating a database of signatures-or codes that identify known pornographic images-so that Internet service providers can spot them and stop them from being shared.

The group will also research and develop tools for law enforcement in addition to studying the technology that predators use to exploit children and to conceal their activity.

NCMEC's CyberTipline collects reports of child sexual exploitation. NCMEC has assisted law enforcement with more than 119,800 missing child cases, resulting in the recovery of more than 102,200 children.

#### Apple Releases Mac OS X 10.4.7

Apple has update Mac OS X 10.4.7 on Tuesday, addressing several issues with the operating system. Separate updates were released for PowerPC and Intel versions of Mac OS X.

According to notes provided with both packages, the updates address the same issues. Among the changes, Mac OS X 10.4.7 addresses an issue that prevents AFP deadlocks and dropped connections; saving Adobe and Quark documents to AFP mounted volumes is more reliable; and Bluetooth file transfers, pairing and connecting to a Bluetooth mouse and syncing to mobile phones has been improved.

Audio playback in QuickTime, iTunes, Final Cut Pro and Soundtrack has been improved in the update and an issue with determining the space required to burn folders has been fixed. Users of Apple's .Mac will be happy to hear that problems with syncing addresses, bookmarks, calendar events and files has also been fixed.

In addition to several other changes, Apple also included previous standalone updates with Mac OS X 10.4.7. The updates are available from the Software Update mechanism in Mac OS X or from Apple's Web site.

## Google Online Payment System Could Take On PayPal

Google Inc. is expected to unveil on Wednesday an online payment system called GBuy, which analysts say will allow merchants to accept payment for services and could become a broad-based alternative to eBay's PayPal, the dominant system.

Analyst Danny Sullivan, editor of SearchEngineWatch.com, said he expected Google to make the announcement on Wednesday and to target online merchants rather than consumer-to-consumer payments, which is PayPal's traditional strength.

Google is targeting sites that may not be able to take credit cards, which is a common problem in international markets, he said.

"It may be something that large businesses internationally who do not really have a way to handle online payments from customers might want to use," Sullivan said.

"We highlight that Google has yet to launch its own e-commerce and payment efforts, which represent major competitive challenges to eBay's historical dominance," Deutsche Bank analyst Jeetil Patel said in client a note.

RBC Capital analyst Jordan Rohan had predicted that Google would introduce the system - formerly code-named Google Wallet - as early as this week.

"GBuy is focused on consumer-to-merchant transactions, but there is no reason why it eventually could not be expanded to consumer-to-consumer," he wrote in a June 9 note to clients.

Google executives confirmed they are developing an online payment system but say it is not meant to compete directly with PayPal, which gives consumers ways instantly to wire money from bank accounts or credit cards via e-mail to merchants or other consumers.

"Billing and payments have historically been a part of Google's advertising programs and online services," Megan Lamb, a company spokeswoman, said in a statement that acknowledged existing activities but declined to confirm its further plans.

"We offer users the ability to buy items on Google Base and at the Google Store as well as pay for services like Google AdWords, Google Video and Google Earth," she said.

Rohan said the service will be free during a trial period, then it will begin charging a rate of 1.5 percent to 2 percent on payments, which is equal to or slightly below the rates charged by PayPal.

GBuy may become part of a plan to create a single user identification/password system to simplify how Google authenticates users as they move from service to service, he said.

The system will appear on Google search results pages by designating a merchant accepting payments as a "trusted GBuy merchant."

Beyond the basic utility of a click-to-pay system, GBuy promises to help Google to monitor the transaction data flowing through the system, which Rohan said could allow the Web search leader to track which search results turn into paid sales.

"If harnessed, the precision of this targeting could be revolutionary," Rohan said.

Aware of the threat, PayPal has been moving aggressively to expand the number of ways customers can use its payment services. It now offers PayPal-branded credit cards tied to its online service. It expects to double the number of countries this year where it conducts services to around 100.

Dana Stadler, PayPal's vice president of North America operations, said in a recent interview that two-thirds of PayPal purchasing volume takes place through eBay sites, and one-third away from eBay on other sites that link to PayPal.

Roughly 12 percent of e-commerce transactions in the United States last year were paid for using PayPal. PayPal boasts 100 million users worldwide and is expected to handle more than \$30 billion in gross payment volume over the next year, he said.

Last month, eBay announced a wide-ranging U.S. partnership with Google rival Yahoo Inc. to embed PayPal payment services across Yahoo's network of sites.

"PayPal is going to be deeply integrated into Yahoo," Stadler said. "This is not a lightweight partnership."

#### Google Checkout To Make Debut

Google Inc. on Thursday will launch a long-awaited service called Google Checkout, which some analysts said could help online merchants boost sales and convince them to commit more advertising money to the Web search leader.

Analysts were mixed on whether the product, initially available only in the United States, puts eBay Inc.'s PayPal online payment system in Google's competitive sights.

The new offering, referred to in news and analyst reports as GBuy or Google Wallet, promises online sellers an easy way to add a checkout to their sites and can be used in addition to other options such as PayPal or a merchant's own pay system.

Google said Checkout stores names, shipping and credit card information and eliminates the need for consumers to resubmit that data with each purchase. Google is responsible for processing the credit card payments and keeping data safe.

"We think we're making e-commerce a lot more efficient and easier to use," Salar Kamangar, Google's vice president of product management, told Reuters.

Google charges merchants 2 percent of the value of each sale plus 20 cents per transaction - a fee that early users said was in line with other options. The company rewards its advertisers by offering them \$10 in free sales processing for every dollar they spend on its advertising program, AdWords.

"There is a clear revenue opportunity here," said Greg Sterling, an independent analyst, who noted that Google built its massive business on lots of tiny transactions.

While Sterling said eBay and financial analysts will likely view the product as a PayPal competitor, Forrester analyst Charlene Li and early users such as Buy.com said it will expand the market by giving consumers another way to pay.

"I don't think this was created to compete with eBay. (Google) did this to create more search advertising," Li said.

Li said search ads have become so popular that merchants - especially sellers of sought-after products like digital cameras - have seen key word ads become prohibitively pricey.

If Google helps Web retailers sell more, they could be persuaded to spend more money on AdWords, Li said.

"It's a win, win, win all around."

"Google is looking at exactly the right problem," said John Bresee, president of Backcountry.com, which specializes in high-end outdoor gear and had \$52 million in revenue in 2005.

The company, along with online stores run by Starbucks Corp., Timberland, Levi Strauss & Co. and underwear seller Jockey, is among the first to try Checkout.

Users will be shown in search results next to a shopping cart icon, and Bresee hopes it can convert a higher percentage of shoppers into buyers.

"What we may discover is that Google knows a lot about search, but they don't know a lot about the way consumers are shopping. We just don't know," Bresee said.

In storing personal data, Google Checkout is reminiscent of Passport, Microsoft's online wallet, which bumped into security and privacy issues and failed to live up to the software titan's expectations after its launch about seven years ago.

While Google is popular, it angered privacy advocates with an e-mail product that delivers ads based on message content.

Li predicted an eventual backlash as Google pushes ahead with its goal to be the world's information clearinghouse and encounters inevitable customer service problems.

"Whereas Microsoft wanted to own the desktop, Google wants the monopoly on your information," she said, noting Checkout also provides buyers with a purchase history that shows where they spend their money. "I'm concerned that they could fall into a situation where they're the next Microsoft."

Microsoft Pushes Back Office 2007 Release

Microsoft Corp. said on Thursday it will delay the release of its Office

2007 business productivity software to improve product performance in the latest setback for the world's largest software maker.

Microsoft said it will now aim for a launch of Office 2007 to business customers by the end of 2006 rather than an earlier target of October. Microsoft also said it would delay the general availability of the Office upgrade to early 2007 from its previous January target.

The delay of the 2007 Microsoft Office package, which includes the Word processor, Excel spreadsheet and PowerPoint presentation software, marks the latest slip-up at Microsoft, which has been plagued by a series of postponements.

Microsoft had already pushed back the consumer launch of Office in March to coincide with the delayed debut of its Windows Vista operating system. It postponed the release of its much-anticipated upgrade to Windows until after the crucial holiday shopping season to improve the system's quality.

Office and Windows are Microsoft's two mainstay products, accounting for more than half of the company's total revenue.

Jupiter Research analyst Joe Wilcox downplayed the latest delay for Office since most businesses were probably not planning to deploy the software before the end of the year, but said this could deal another blow to the company's image.

"It may not instill much confidence with some customers," said Wilcox. "Microsoft seems unable to meet its dates."

Microsoft said it decided to push back Office, because it wanted to implement feedback from the company's latest test, or "beta" release.

"Based on internal testing and beta 2 feedback around product performance, we are revising our development schedule," said a Microsoft spokeswoman.

The company also said it plans to assess the impact of the Office 2007 delay on its Windows Vista launch, which had been targeted to move at the same time as Office 2007.

#### Maine To Extend Laptop Program With Apple

Maine has signed off on a \$41 million contract with Apple Computer Inc. to provide new laptop computers to more than 30,000 seventh- and eighth-graders and their teachers, extending the laptop program for another four years.

Maine was the first state to equip students statewide with laptops, and officials say the initiative remains the biggest of its type in the nation.

The deal announced Thursday is similar to the one reached when the project was originally launched in 2002. It works out to an annual cost of \$289 per laptop.

It calls for Apple to equip 32,000 students and 4,000 teachers with iBook notebook computers and upgraded wireless networks. The four-year contract also includes warranties and perks like professional development for each of Maine's 241 public middle schools.

The program, aimed at eliminating the so-called "digital divide" between wealthy and poor students, has been deemed a success by administrators.

In Cape Elizabeth, technology coordinator Gary Lanoie said he would have a problem on his hands if the state failed to continue the program.

"The first four years have been really good," Lanoie said. "If we didn't find a way to continue the project at our middle schools, our teachers would be very upset with me. They might lynch me. It's that ingrained."

The new laptops are improved over the older units, with greater memory, faster processors and built-in DVD combo drives, officials say.

The older laptops are being kept instead of discarded. Those computers are being upgraded with fundraising support from former Gov. Angus King, who initiated the laptop program, and school districts are redeploying them in other grades or for other purposes.

That means the total number of laptops in Maine public schools this fall will number more than 70,000, said Maine Education Commission Susan Gendron.

Maine's Department of Education announced in March that Apple had been chosen over CDW Corp.'s unit that provides technological services to government, education and health care. CDW's proposal called for Lenovo ThinkPads in partnership with other vendors.

### Coming Soon: Mind-Reading Computers

If a quizzical look or a disapproving frown crosses your face as you read this, you might want to start practicing your poker face - that is, of course, unless you want your computer to know what you are feeling.

British and American scientists will soon reveal a prototype of their mood-reading technology at a science exhibition in London, scheduled for the first week of July.

Project leader Professor Peter Robinson of the University of Cambridge in England said that the system has already been shown to recognize facial expressions in actors. The expressions are then used to infer emotional states - happiness, sadness, confusion, interest, boredom, and so on.

A webcam's images of the user's face are read by the software for telltale visual signs of emotional states. The data from the webcam is assessed according to two dozen "feature points" on the face and 20 facial movements, like nodding.

Yawning, for instance, is practically the international symbol for boredom or sleepiness. A focusing of eyes and a concentrated expression can indicate interest.

Robinson, whose British team has been collaborating with a team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said that he envisioned this mood-reading system being used to help people, such as providing directions when a driver looks confused or, in educational settings, asking different questions if the user appears bored.

It might also assist advertising agencies in developing more precise targeting of ads that are based on emotional state. The research team, he said, is working with a car company that envisions the system being used in cars within five years.

Visitors at the science exhibition, organized by the Royal Society, Britain's academy of scientists, will be asked to allow their faces to be read and enable researchers to fine tune their understanding of emotional states with a batch of fresh data.

At some point, the researchers hope to add physical gestures, such as hand movements or posture, to their repertoire of expressive "tells."

Laura DiDio, a Yankee Group analyst, cautioned that this project has many issues to be resolved before it could be used in the real world. For instance, she noted, a lot of facial gestures are open to interpretation.

"Then there are questions about legality of reading someone's expression," she said. "There are also questions about cost, how it is used, the security safeguards, privacy, parental consent."

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